

## **Mafia God 347**

### Chapter 347: His Phone Is Switched Off

And yet now? Now Marco would have traded a year off his life to have Ricardo standing in front of him.

Because Val had to break off this engagement nonsense so they could move forward. And Marco wanted to move forward.

Christ, he wanted to move a thousand steps ahead. He wanted no more half-confessions, no more stolen moments, no more pretending what had happened between him and Valentina had been some fever dream. He wanted clarity. He wanted action. He wanted the damned ring off her finger by the cleanest means possible.

Which, unfortunately, required Ricardo. So Marco had spent practically the entire day hunting him.

He had been in and out of cars, on and off calls, walking the city visiting every where he thought the man could be. He had asked questions at Commissioned, through staff, through security. By midday, he was running on irritation.

The last confirmed sighting of Ricardo—or rather, Ricardo's car—had been near the entrance to Commissioned.

But the strange part was that he never actually went in. That fact bothered Marco. Ben had also emphasised that Ricardo had sent a message after ignoring call after call.

Marco looked one inconvenience away from committing a felony? If Marco was being honest with himself, Ricardo really did love Valentina.

The problem was that Ricardo broke easily. So maybe that was all this was. Marco wondered what he could have done this time that could make him need to run.

Was Ricardo still drowning in guilt over giving Bianca information, or was it something more?

Marco couldn't tell. Still, whatever the reason, Marco didn't like going back to Valentina empty-handed. He really didn't.

It felt like failure, even if it wasn't technically his fault. He had spent the day chasing shadows.

Val needed answers, and he had none. By the time he got to the apartment she now shared with Ricardo, the evening had settled fully over the city. The hallway outside the unit was quiet.

Then he knocked. A few seconds later, the door opened. Valentina stood there. And for one stupid, dangerous second, the whole miserable day lost its grip on him.

"Hey, Marco," she said, her eyes lit up the instant she saw him.

"Hey..." he answered.

They both leaned forward slightly at the same time, instinctively, their bodies had already decided what they wanted. Marco's hand twitched at his side. It looked like she might throw herself into his arms and he might let her.

Then they both thought better of it. Marco stepped back first.

"I—uh..." He cleared his throat and forced himself to focus.

"I haven't been able to reach Ricardo," he said. "His phone is switched off."

Valentina's face fell, the light in her expression dimming.

"But..." he added quickly, trying to give her something, anything. "I have his line tracked. The moment he turns it on," Marco said, "I'll get a notification."

"What does this mean?" Valentina asked, the earlier brightness gone from her face. "Why... why would he do this?"

"I don't know," he admitted. "Guilt," he said after a moment. "Fear... a number of things."

"What does this mean for us?" she asked.

He swallowed. "Uh...I guess we have to wait."

Valentina dropped her gaze, nodding once, it clearly wasn't what she wanted to hear. "I'm so sorry, Marco."

"It's not your fault," he said. "It isn't."

She looked up again, and there was such genuine regret in her face that it nearly undid him.

"Whenever it happens," he continued, gentler now, "it happens. I waited this long. I can wait a bit more." He hoped she heard what he wasn't saying.

I want this. I want you. I'm still here.

Valentina's throat worked slightly as she looked at him. "You want to come in for coffee or something?" she asked.

"That," he said, "would be a terrible idea."

"You look like saying that physically pains you."

"It does. ...I should get going. I will let you know if I hear anything."

Val nodded slowly.

"You doing good though?" he asked.

"Yeah... yeah... I am," Valentina said. She tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and glanced back into the apartment over her shoulder. "I was thinking of moving out today. Back to our house."

"You need any help?" he asked. "I can get someone here."

Val gave a small nod. "Sure. Sure... I would appreciate it."

"Done." Marco nodded once more and forced himself to turn away. He walked toward the elevator.

The elevator arrived with a soft ding. He stepped inside and turned just before the doors shut.

Valentina was still there. And then, with the sweetness that could ruin a man's life, she lifted her fingers to her lips and blew him a kiss.

Marco smiled. The doors slid closed, and he stood there alone in the elevator like a complete idiot, that smile still stuck to his face all the way down to the lobby, all the way out to the driveway, all the way until he got into his car.

That was how whipped he was. He knew it. Accepted it. Would probably have signed a document confirming it if asked.

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Since Bianca arrived, she had not left her suite in the Genovese mansion. She had been escorted in and then placed under constant watch. Guards outside.

Bianca Vitale had returned to Italy like a disgraced bride. She hated that she had already been judged.

Written off. Condemned before there was proof she had done anything wrong. A Vitale heiress reduced to a woman under watch.

She had been sitting rigidly on the sofa for what felt like hours when the door handle twisted. Bianca jumped to her feet before the door had fully opened, her heart lurching hard against her ribs.

Massimo Genovese filled the doorway. Bianca stayed silent as he took a couple of steps inside. Massimo stopped a few feet away.

Then he spoke.

"I failed you."

Of all the things she had expected from the Don—accusation, interrogation, cold fury—that had not been one of them.